

The Role of Gender Equity in Mobilizing Colorado's Untapped Talent

Katica Roy, CEO Pipeline

The supply and demand of talent in Colorado is critical to its economic growth. Why? Colorado has the lowest unemployment rate of any state in the U.S. at [2.4%](#), our [compound annual growth rate is 1.9%](#) (.8 points above the U.S. as a whole) and we had one of the highest increases in real GDP in the U.S. at [3%](#). It's clear that if Colorado desires to continue to grow its economy, it must continue to have a skilled and growing workforce. The skills gap is well known across the U.S. - we will have [5 million jobs we can not fill by 2020](#). What is what less well known is that gender inequity is compounding this problem across the U.S. and right here in Colorado.

Gender *equity* [means fairness of treatment for women and men](#), according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities. When we apply that to the Colorado workforce, what we mean is that we ensure opportunity is not limited simply on the basis of gender and that we correct for gender biases so that economic outcomes improve for all.

A 2008 Swedish study¹ examined the connection between gender equality, economic growth and employment, and found three key factors to the interplay of economics and gender equality: *education attainment, labor force participation* and *pay*. In fact, [additional studies](#) have further delineated the order of importance of the factors is:

1. Education attainment
2. Labor force participation
3. Pay (wages)

What's the picture in Colorado?

Education:

In aggregate, Colorado fares well in terms of education attainment by women: [37.5% of women in Colorado](#) hold a bachelor's degree or higher ([4 points higher](#) than the U.S. as whole). However, when we add the lens of intersectionality of race and ethnicity, we find a gap. White or an Asian woman are almost twice as likely to hold a bachelor's degree than their [Black, Native American or Latina sisters](#). We are leaving our sisters of color behind and losing out on their talent.

Labor Force Participation:

As of 2017, women's labor force participation in Colorado was [63.08%](#) and women made up [46% of the entire workforce](#) in Colorado. Unfortunately, the labor force participation rate of women is slated to fall [2.32% by 2025](#) which means we will have 59,000 fewer women in the workforce by 2025 - at a time when we need to increase the labor force participation of all of our citizens. While women also make up almost half of the Colorado labor force, they are more than [twice as likely as men to work part time](#). In order to grow our economy, we need to fix the gap in labor force participation to realize the full potential of our labor force.

¹ Löfström, Å. (2009). Gender equality, economic growth and employment. Swedish Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

Wages:

We will not reach equal pay in Colorado for 40 years - [until 2057](#). Women earn [80 cents on the dollar of their male colleagues](#). In fact, "[at almost every educational level, women in Colorado earn less than men with lower educational qualifications](#)." And, if we only look at the top 2% of earners in Colorado, there is a [61% gap](#). That means that the top 2% female earners in Colorado make 39 cents for every dollar their male peers make. To be clear, this statistic is not just about equal pay for equal work, but about equal opportunity.

Women are also the sole or co-breadwinners in [42.5% of the households](#) in our state with children under the age of 18. When we leave out women - we leave out the next generation. In fact, in Colorado [36.5% of households with single mothers live in poverty](#) (twice the rate of single fathers and five times the rate of married couples).

Why should we care?

A comprehensive study showed that if we achieved gender equity in Colorado, [we could add \\$40B to our economy](#). Whether or not you believe gender inequity is an issue, it is a tremendous opportunity for Colorado - we are leaving money on the table and constricting our state's economy by not closing the gender inequity gap.

We have work to do

Colorado, we have work to do - we have a leaky pipeline. There is great opportunity in fixing the system and immediately correcting gender inequity in the workforce. In shifting our thinking that *women are broken*, instead to the truth that *the system is broken and needs fixing*. But, not if we wait.

I am confident that with Colorado's rich history of fortitude and our pioneering spirit, we can create a new future.

[Your voice matters-- share your thoughts](#) and let's fix the leaky pipeline.

About Pipeline

[Pipeline](#) is a Denver-based startup drives economic gains through closing the gender equity gap. Pipeline's proprietary SaaS platform uses AI to action against the gender biases costing the U.S. alone \$2 trillion each year.

Bio: [Katica Roy](#) is an ambassador for gender equity in the workplace and beyond. She is the CEO and co-founder of Denver-based [Pipeline](#). Katica is also a former member of the ATD Public Policy Council, for which she co-authored, "Bridging the Skills Gap," a 2013 white paper, and the follow-on, "Strategies for Narrowing the Skills Gap," a 2014 paid publication. As a member of the ATD Public Policy Council, Katica met with members of Congress to discuss the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, reauthorized as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in 2014, which was also informed by research brought forth in "Bridging the Skills Gap".